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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000055

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#) [KJUS](#) [KCRM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: FURTHER REACTION TO BANGKOK BOMBS: SURAYUD
BACKPEDALS

REF: A. BANGKOK 16 (NITYA ON BOMBINGS)
[1](#)B. BANGKOK 15 (BOMBINGS ASCRIBED)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (S/NF) Prime Minister Surayud publicly backed away from his January 1 assertion that opposition political figures had orchestrated the December 31 bombings. A leading Army General continued to implicate former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, however, and promised "harsh measures" against promoters of chaos. Former Prime Minister Chavalit denied involvement in the bombings and said the authorities should be making arrests if they had evidence indicating who the culprits were. A Bangkok-based intelligence official speculated about the possible culprits and said the best way to restore stability would be through holding elections to install a more legitimate government. End Summary.

SURAYUD BACKPEDALS...

[1](#)2. (C) In public remarks on January 3, Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont moderated his January 1 claim that the bombing was likely orchestrated by political figures who had been disadvantaged by the coup (ref B). Surayud said he had made assumptions based on the modus operandi of the bombers. "We cannot pin down exactly any group of individuals who did it," he said. "I haven't had any evidence or information."
(Comment: Surayud loses face by acknowledging his earlier remarks represented a rush to judgment, but, given that the media is not giving him a free pass, it is better to acknowledge the error now than to prolong the agony. End Comment.)

... BUT SAPRANG REMAINS FIRM

[1](#)3. (SBU) On the other hand, General Saprang Kanlayanamit, Assistant Secretary General of the Council for National Security (CNS), in January 3 public remarks, maintained that the former regime had organized the December 31 bombings in order to discredit the government. Saprang announced that the CNS's Special Operations Center would clamp down on those causing chaos in the country. He said the government had so far been lenient in dealing with those who had become "persona non grata" (read: Thaksin Shinawatra and cohorts), but the authorities would now employ "harsh measures."

CHAVALIT LASHES OUT

14. (C) Former Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh -- alleged privately by Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram (ref A) and others as having a hand in the bombings -- publicly denied involvement. Chavalit labeled as "gross incompetence" Saprang Kanlayanamit's failure to arrest the culprits if he had incriminating information, as Saprang had claimed. Chavalit denied also a rumor that Thaksin had provided him with 1.5 billion Baht (over 40 million USD) in order to undermine the CNS and Surayud's administration.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICIAL OFFERS VIEWS

15. (S/NF) A high-ranking Bangkok-based intelligence official from a friendly country on January 4 offered his perspective on the December 31 bombings. This official, with many years' service in Thailand, admitted uncertainty about the culpable group, but leaned toward believing the perpetrators were domestic political actors rather than southern separatists. He doubted Thaksin's personal involvement, however, noting that Thaksin might instigate violence if pushed into a corner, but his situation had not yet become sufficiently dire to spur Thaksin to take such steps.

16. (S/NF) The official considered it plausible that Chavalit or his associates might be involved. (Comment: Chavalit, while currently aligned with Thaksin, also has interests distinct from the former Prime Minister's and should not be seen simply as Thaksin's tool. End Comment.) He also

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believed one of the more likely scenarios was that disaffected members of the CNS -- those he termed "minority shareholders" -- orchestrated the bombings to gain greater power, or perhaps to pave the way for a second coup d'etat against Surayud and the current CNS leaders. The September 19 coup required very little manpower, the official noted, and this fact might well inspire an ambitious figure to launch a new putsch.

17. (S/NF) The official worried aloud about the possibility of continuing violence, as various actors might seek to discredit or destabilize the government in order to seize power for themselves. The best way to restore stability, he opined, would be for the Thais to hold elections and install a government with greater legitimacy.

BOYCE